

Message Text

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CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, SS, AG
SUBJECT: SAHARA ROUNDUP: POLISARIO CONTINUE TO CLAIM VICTORIES

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: AFTER PERIOD OF QUIET, POLISARIO PROPAGANDA HAS RECENTLY BEEN REPORTING WHAT IT PRESENTS AS STEPPED-UP MILITARY PACE IN SAHARA, WHILE ALGERIAN MEDIA CONTINUES HIGHLIGHT EVERY ENCOURAGING OMEN IT CAN FIND, INCLUDING ENTIRE UN REPORT ON BENIN AFFAIR. END SUMMARY.

2. IF ONE IS TO BE GUIDED BY POLISARIO PROPAGANDA, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT WAR IN SAHARA HAS HEATED UP. RECENT POLISARIO COMMUNIQUES ON CONTINUING EL OUALI OFFENSIVE HAVE BEEN BOASTING OF MORE STEADY STREAM OF MILITARY SUCCESSES THAN WE HAVE SEEN IN SOME TIME, AND DIMENSIONS OF ALLEGED SUCCESSES HAVE GROWN AS WELL. SPECIFICALLY:

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A. EARLY MARCH COMMUNIQUE CLAIMS POLISARIO INFILDED 400 CASUALTIES ON MAURITANIAN AND MOROCCAN FORCES DURING SECOND HALF OF FEBRUARY AND SEIZED CONSIDERABLE AMOUNTS OF EQUIPMENT; COMMUNIQUE STRESSES EQUALLY ENGAGEMENTS ON "SOUTHERN FRONT" (MAURITANIA), "NORTHERN FRONT" (MOROCCO), AS WELL AS IN SAHARA ITSELF.

B. MARCH 13 COMMUNIQUE REPORTS TICHIT BATTLE IN WHICH 37 MAURITANIAN SOLDIERS KILLED, 23 WOUNDED, AND 11 CAPTURED, INCLUDING ONE OFFICER, AND BOU CRAA BATTLE IN WHICH 9 MOROCCAN SOLDIERS KILLED AND 6 WOUNDED.

C. MARCH 16 COMMUNIQUE REPORTS POLISARIO ATTACK ON MOROCCAN CONVOY NORTH OF BOUJADOR IN SAHARA IN WHICH 20 MOROCCAN SOLDIERS KILLED AND 50 WOUNDED.

D. MARCH 17 COMMUNIQUE ANNOUNCES MARCH 15 AMBUSH OF JOINT MOROCCAN/MAURITANIAN FORCE NEAR AGUERGUER WHICH RESULTED IN 52 DEAD AND 48 WOUNDED AND PRODUCED 7 MAURITANIAN AND 11 MOROCCAN PRISONERS; COMMUNIQUE ALLEGES CAPTAIN SIDINA OULD SIDIA, COMMANDER OF MAURITANIAN FORCES AT DAKHLA, KILLED ALONG WITH LIEUTENANT AMAR, COMMANDER OF MAURITANIAN GENDARMARIE COMPANY.

E. MARCH 19 COMMUNIQUE REPORTS MARCH 13 ATTACK ON MOROCCAN FORCES AT BIR ENZARAN IN WHICH 37 MOROCCANS KILLED AND 56 WOUNDED.

3. ALONG WITH INCREASED CLAIMS OF MILITARY SUCCESSES, ALGERIAN MEDIA HAS CONTINUED TO FLAG EVERY POSSIBLE FAVORABLE INTERNATIONAL OMEN. IN ADDITION TO MAURITANIAN DEFECTOR SURFACED 8 MARCH (ALGIERS 0628), ALGERIAN MEDIA HAS PUBLICIZED VISITS AND STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT FROM TOGOLESE MINISTER OF INFORMATION, MADAGASCAR MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AND FRENCH CGT SECGEN

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GEORGE SEGUY. FAVORABLE PRESS ARTICLES FROM DAKAR'S "AFRIQUE NOUVELLE", "NEW YORK TIMES", AND BELGIAN "LE SOIR" HIGHLIGHTED, AS WERE APPEAL OF SIX OPPOSITION SPANISH PARTIES TO GOVERNMENT TO DENOUNCE MADRID TRIPARTITE ACCORD AND CREATION BY UNION OF ARAB YOUTH OF COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY INTO SAHARA QUESTION.

4. RECENT COVERAGE TOPPED BY MARCH 22 PUBLICATION IN FRENCH LANGUAGE DAILY EL MOUDJAHID OF SPECIAL EDITION CONTAINING COMPLETE TEXT OF UNSC SPECIAL MISSION'S REPORT ON BENIN AFFAIR.

5. COMMENT: IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO SIFT POLISARIO FACT FROM POLISARIO FICTION. EVEN WHEN ONE ACCEPTS THAT POLISARIO COMMUNIQUES EXAGGERATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS MANY FOLD, RECENT INCREASING FREQUENCY OF COMMUNIQUES AND THEIR REPORTING OF LARGER BATTLES SUGGESTS HIGHER LEVEL OF VIOLENCE SAHARA THAN BEFORE. FURTHERMORE, WESTERN JOURNALISTS WHO VISIT SAHARA CONTINUE TO RETURN IMPRESSED BY POLISARIO ACCOMPLISHMENTS,

DEDICATION, AND ORGANIZATION. IN ADDITION TO MARVINE HOWE OF NY TIMES (ALGIERS 0668), AFP CORRESPONDENT HAS COME BACK WITH SAME IMPRESSION. FURTHERMORE, TWO LOCAL JOURNALISTS WHO HAVE VISITED SAHARA OFF AND ON SINCE BEGINNING OF CONFLICT HAVE JUST RETURNED FROM ANOTHER VISIT AND REPORT THAT THEY WERE IMPRESSED BY POLISARIO PROGRESS IN ORGANIZATION AND INCREASE IN ITS CAPABILITIES.LYNE

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